

Mary Austad

From: Jason Renaud <info@mentalhealthportland.org>
Sent: Tuesday, August 31, 2021 9:08 PM
To: Mary Austad
Subject: Response to question about mobile crisis teams in other cities
Attachments: Background - Jason Renaud.pdf

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Your Honor,

I'll take a stab at answering your question to my colleague KC Lewis of the Mental Health Alliance and Disability Rights Oregon from the *US DOJ v City of Portland* status hearing - what are other cities doing with mobile crisis services?

My experience is - along with Mark Schorr who also testified for the Mental Health Alliance, and other people - lifting up five mobile crisis teams at once during the first year of operation of Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare - 2001. We had about 120 people in the field covering the entire county for clients who had severe and persistent mental illness and refused to participate in treatment services. Those five teams lasted about two years before they were defunded during a budget crisis by the county commissioners. Cascadia maintains one of these now - [Project Respond](#).

Also, my organization, the Mental Health Association of Portland, has recently launched the [Alternative Mobile Services Association](#) to help cities get programs like Portland Street Response up and running. PSR is a member, as is Eugene, Vancouver, Washington, Olympia, Atlanta, Chicago, and New York City. We're just getting started. We'll have a two-day [conference](#) in February with all the details.

[CAHOOTS](#) is not the oldest or the largest or the best managed mobile crisis service, but because of a spate of publicity they are the best known. Its secret sauce is the culture of Eugene - laid back, interpersonal, careful and care-taking. The name comes from a potluck in the mid-1980s, where coincidentally the Oregon Country Fair was also cooked up, and means "we're in cahoots with the cops" to rescue our friends from jail. I don't think CAHOOTS is precisely replicable because each mobile team needs to be fully integrated with their local services and police. Their success took 17 years to attain and is the accumulation of repeated brief visits to build trust prior to a crisis - not a possible strategy in a big city.

Wall Street Journal - [When Mental-Health Experts, Not Police, Are the First Responders](#)

[Atlanta Policing Alternatives and Diversion Initiative](#) (PAD) - one of my favorite teams germinated from the LGBTQ community in 2015. Staff is largely not-clinical, African American, and well led by their visionary leader, Moki Macias.

Washington Post - [We need to rethink mental health care — and the assumptions we have about what support means](#)

New York City - [B*HEARD Program](#) just started in June and is limited to parts of Harlem and East Harlem for the duration. Hard to tell if the various initiatives started by Bill DeBlasio's wife will continue with the new administration. NYC has had a lot of starts and stops helping people with severe and persistent mental illness over the past 40 years.

Developed by e state legislator and the Denver police chief within the Hispanic health advocacy community,

Denver's [Support Team Assisted Response \(STAR\) Program](#) was largely shaped by CAHOOTS - probably the largest city where the Eugene crew got deeply involved.

I've visited the [City of Olympia's Crisis Response Unit](#) several times. They're embedded in the police department, but because Oly is so small and the homeless population is concentrated in the downtown area, almost everything is done by foot. The CRU started with a third party contractor but got frustrated with staff turnover so brought the outreach team into the police department and gave them a super smart manager, a big raise and union representation.

The Chicago Public Health Department will jump started the Crisis Assistance Response and Engagement (CARE) Program August 30. The Chicago police do not have a co-responder team so this is probably the first big city to have a public health department take on a mobile crisis team completely separate from the police. Philadelphia is also a few months away from standing up a team.

Mayor Lightfoot's office - [press release on the CARE Program and other new initiatives](#)
Chicago Sun Times - [Mental health clinicians will start answering some 911 calls in Chicago — instead of cops](#)

I'll add [Portland Street Response](#) here for context. I took Hardesty to Eugene to ride with the CAHOOTS team and leveraged Wheeler and Chief Outlaw to go as well. But outside of a couple of conversations, CAHOOTS had little to do with how PSR was created. It's very small by comparison, has a huge budget, contained to one neighborhood, and is stuck in a seemingly endless turf battle between the PPA and the mayor's office.

Good also for you to know about [Portland Street Medicine](#) - a volunteer effort by hospital medical staff from all over the area - their effect is much larger than PSR at this time. They're medically oriented and daring, meaning they dispense medications, suture wounds, and escort patients to clinics and hospitals. They're the real deal. Their leader is Drew Grabham LCSW of OHSU - an overwhelming character and as deep as you want to go.

[Mobile Assistance Community Responders of Oakland](#) (MACRO) had a complex and hard birth through largely political channels but launched in June 2021 and we're looking forward to good reports soon. The project was shepherded through the city council by police accountability advocates.

There are dozens of others (not 300) - Indianapolis, Austin and San Antonio, San Francisco, Los Angeles has several in various stages of development - and many small cities. The [LEAD program](#), started in Seattle, is also interesting. The Atlanta PAD program started as a LEAD program. The Multnomah County DA has a LEAD program through Central City Concern. And many smaller cities are at some point of development. And hundreds of community mental health agencies have teams which do outreach for that agency's clients.

Here's a good overview comparing the Austin program with the Eugene program - [Alternatives to Police as First Responders: Crisis Response Programs](#)

Let me know if I can answer any questions. I've attached my bio for your reference.

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